

START ENGAGING WITH COMMUNITY

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The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health's (LACDMH) School Threat Assessment Response Team (START) is a unique countywide team within the Emergency Outreach Bureau (EOB) which responds to threat-related psychiatric crises in a school setting, including K-12 and higher education. START actively outreaches to schools and colleges to promote awareness of the program and to offer mental health support to the educational community. This spring, START participated in two fairs at local community colleges and had the opportunity to meet with students, teachers and staff.

On April 7, the LACDMH START team sponsored an information booth at Santa Monica College Health and Wellness Fair, hosted by the school's Health Services unit. START members were on hand to answer a variety of questions from the community about stalking, threats and school shootings. The team also provided information in the form of the START referral form, program brochures and information sheets

On May 6th and 7th, the START team sponsored an information booth at El Camino College's Mental Health Awareness Fair. In addition to responding to questions and providing resources, the START team also conducted a presentation titled "Suicide

Awareness and Prevention.” Participants were educated about the identification and response to suicide. Information equipped participants with tools that would help build their confidence in asking loved ones about suicide and steps to take when suicide concerns are identified.

Participants in the presentation demonstrated interest and value in the topic. The START team met with participants and answered questions at the conclusion of the presentation. One participant thanked the team because “I went through that and I am happy that you are educating people about what to do and how to ask.” One student was linked directly to the Student Health Services after he reported severe anxiety and requested assistance. He said that he never told anybody and has not received services to “deal with the anxiety.” This is one example of the benefits that community resource fairs offer in supporting individuals who are suffering psychological problems. Every month should be mental health awareness month.